



# Sarah Cornally

*Evolving Leaders • Transforming Organisations*

## How to Connect to Your Power in the Face of a Bully

Author Sarah Cornally

A bully has a hold when you believe you can only comply with the bully's wishes, whether it is verbal taunting, intimidation or physical threats. Your challenge is to expand your range of choices.

### **What is power?**

The ability to make things happen.

### **Where does power come from?**

From our belief in our ability to make things happen and the actions we take to make things happen.

We can take actions that don't cause harm to others or we can take actions and disregard the harm. The first requires more creativity than the second. The first requires sensitivity to others and an ability to influence. The first requires resilience and resourcefulness in the face of frustration.

### **Who holds the power?**

Real lasting power comes from within you. It is something you know about yourself.

You know you can make things happen. You know you can influence people. You know you can find another way to make things happen if there is a barrier. You know you decide what you think of you. You know you have a range of choices and with some thought, help or advice you can find them. You know you are not alone. You know you have nothing to prove.

### **Why do bullies bully?**

They don't feel powerful, they feel powerless. They feel vulnerable and are intolerant of that feeling. Often bullies have people in their lives who make them feel that way even though you wouldn't know it. It might be something they carry from the past.

Bullies bully so they can get relief from this feeling and prove to themselves they are not powerless. They don't know the things that empower people. They search for people who show some vulnerability that they can overpower.

### **How do you give your power away?**

You make them more important than you. You give credibility to their proposition. You allow your fears to expand. You allow your emotional self to be manipulated by their words rather than using your thinking self to examine the reality of their propositions. You allow your values to submit to your fears.

### **Why do you give your power away?**

You forget or don't realise the power that is within you. You may have had someone teach you to give your power away to comply with others wishes for harmony's sake. You may be sensitive and fear you cannot cope.

You may be hungry to belong, be accepted, be approved of, feel loved, feel powerful, and feel protected, to feel safe - anything that makes you feel vulnerable in a threatening way. It can seem as though the bully will give you the approval or sense of belonging or safety, if you give them your power.



### How can you claim your power?

Remember or realise the power is within you. If you give your power to others they have it, not you. Giving your power away does not make you safe, loved or powerful. It simply makes you more vulnerable which is the very thing you want to resolve.

You need to discover your power, search for it in healthy places, develop it and use it appropriately.

Look for evidence of your ability to make things happen and where your emotional needs can be met in a healthy and constructive way. Develop your skills at influencing people both directly and indirectly.

Find people who support and encourage you to follow your heart and passions, and live your values. Invest with them.

Develop your creativity to expand your choices and remove barriers. Discover you have nothing to prove about yourself, only things you want to achieve.

### What are your choices?

A bully has a hold when you believe you can only comply with the bully's wishes, whether it is verbal taunting, intimidation or physical threats. The more narrow your range of choices, the more locked in you become.

Your challenge is to expand your range of choices so you can act consistently with your best interests. Your choices include what you think, what you say to yourself, what you believe, what you want, what you are willing to do.

### How to stand in your power?

If you can see the bully for who or what they are, you can change your relationship with them. You dissolve the illusions and then you hold your own power, not them.

The bully is someone who is so uncomfortable with their vulnerable feelings themselves they have to resort to bullying to cope. That is the only device they have to deal with what they are feeling; their level of fear or frustration is so great they have to threaten others, sometimes violently.

If you find a sanctuary inside yourself where you know your own power you have peace despite what's going on; you no longer are in a dance with the bully. The bully can no longer get from you what they feed on; you cease to be a target.

### How to respond to a bully?

Remember the bully has no sense of their own internal power so it is really unhelpful to try to take their personal power away. You only want to reclaim yours and be clear about your boundaries. The best way is to discover your power, importance and choices and act on them.

When you know and recognize your own power, bullies sense the change in you. They may test once or twice to see if you can be bullied anymore, but if they fail they will stop.

Speaking up in a group situation is about taking a stand for treating people with respect.

The bully's strategy only works if others collude with the bully. Often when you speak to an adult bully about their behaviour, asking whether they mean to be so aggressive or intend to be intimidating, they will become aware of what they are doing and stop.

Alternatively you can simply say to the bully you would like to hear what other people have to say because their views are valuable too. This puts the bully on notice that you will stand up for people, so their tactics are not ok.

Some provocative people still push. You can always ask them directly how this type of behaviour is beneficial, or how this enables us to work together effectively? The point of this exercise is simply to bring the behaviour into the open for discussion, so people don't accommodate or accept inappropriate behaviour.

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For more information on how Sarah Cornally can support your organisation developing a culture where bullying is dealt with constructively, please contact Sarah's EA, on [ea@sarahcornally.com](mailto:ea@sarahcornally.com) or on 02 9801 0659

**More Resources:** There is a great book "Bullybusting: How to help children deal with teasing and bullying" by Evelyn Field. It's full of really practical ideas that work. Find it at [www.bullying.com.au](http://www.bullying.com.au)

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